Jeff Hart Nov 2009

Field Study Summary

Implementing the Plan

Currently I am an eighth grade teacher at Kwayhquitlum Middle School. I work on a team with two other teachers and the main curricular areas that I am responsible for are Math, French, Language Arts and Physical Education. The following is the question that has been researched for the past few months.

How will Sharepoint impact the organization, accountability and learning of my students?

Essentially my plan was to start small by creating a homework board and by uploading copies of assignments onto my Sharepoint site. This was to allow students and parents to view homework. My hope was that parents would be more involved in keeping their children on track with homework completion and students that were away would be able to catch up on missed assignments from home. If students were able to get access to missed assignments and homework it would hopefully free up more time for me. I was able to set up the Sharepoint site quite easily and the homework board has been fairly easy to manage. I ran into some trouble with uploading assignments to the site simply because my scanner broke and I haven’t been able to replace it. Once my site was set up all of my students’ parents were notified that they would be able to check homework and they were directed to the correct site. The initial response from both parents and students was very positive.

Reading Response To Literature

Integrating Technology into the Mathematics Classroom: The Role of Teacher Preparation Programs. By: Mistretta, Mathematics Educator, v15 n1 p18-24 2005. 1 pp.

This article did not turn out to be particularly useful for this field study other than by reinforcing the importance of integrating technology into the curriculum when possible. The article did generate some good ideas about how I could integrate technology into the math classroom. It is likely an article that I will re-visit.

An examination of the Perceptions of K-12 Teachers with Active Classroom Websites. By: Julius, J. In C. Crawford et al. (eds), Proceedings of Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education International Conference 2005 (pp. 1435-1437). Chesapeake, VA: AACE

For me the most important thing that this article indicated was how little research and literature there is on the subject of classroom websites. The majority of teachers surveyed felt that websites were useful. I would assume that is why they had a class website. This article was a difficult read and in the end it really didn’t provide me with a great deal of information that was useful for my field study.

Turning Lurkers into Learners: Increasing Participation in your Online Discussions. By Alley, Jason; Greenhaus, Karen. Learning and Leading with Technology. V35 p. 18-21 Aug. 2007

This article was interesting but it did not provide me with any new information to guide my field study. The article essentially talks about how using tools like Sharepoint for online discussion is a means of engaging students in curriculum based learning. It talks about the value of having students create reflections, share thoughts and questions with others. The article states how important it is for teachers to provide a safe and inviting online discussion environment. While it was an interesting article to read it did not provide me any new insights. It does not matter what environment you are in it is a teacher’s job to create a safe environment for students.

Analyzing Data

1. Student and Parent surveys – A survey was sent home to gather some data on how students were using technology. The survey looked at how students had used technology in the past and whether or not they had been exposed to a classroom website in the past. It also looked at who had access to technology at home and how many parents felt that it was a valuable tool for them to use. Eighty Four students completed the surveys. Results of the survey were as follows:

1. Do you have access to the internet at home? Yes = 92% No = 8%
2. Have you ever been in a class that has used a website? Yes = 58% No = 42%
3. Do you know how to access teacher Sharepoint sites? Yes = 62% No = 38%
4. Will you use the homework board to check your Yes = 84% No = 16%

Homework if it is available to you?

1. Do you ever access the internet on your own time at Yes = 47% No = 53%

school?

2. Data Collection of Students missing assignments

1. Over a three week period I kept track of the number of times that I had to get work for students who were absent. This was done before I was posting the homework to the website. I also kept an estimate of the amount of time it took me to get the students up to date.

Number of times work was requested by students = 17

Estimate of the amount of time to get work for these students = 1 hr 35 min

1. Over the next three week period I Kept track of the number of times that students requested work from me. During this three week period I directed them to the website so it did not take much of my time.

Number of times work was requested by students = 12

3. Students responses to how easy it is to access the homework board. These were taken as students left the class where I explained how to access the homework board. Students were asked to write on a slip whether it was easy, moderately difficult, or difficult.

1. Easy = 68%
2. Moderately difficult = 11%
3. Difficult = 13%
4. Other = 8%

4. Students were asked to respond to a specific question online. While the question was relevant to what we were studying at the time the information that I was actually interested in was how many students actually went onto the website and answered the question.

1. Answered = 100%

5. General observations from Discussions with students

1. Most students that I talked to seemed to think that having an online homework board was a good idea. The majority of students who actually visited the homework board were students who were high academic achievers. Most of the students who had academic difficulties did not visit the site on a regular basis.

Reflecting on the Discoveries

It is a difficult task to make sense of the data that was collected. In general it seems that most people think that having a homework board online is a useful tool. This however does not translate into having most students visit the site on a regular basis. The initial survey indicated that the majority of students had access to the internet at home. Those that did not have it at home were still able to access the website at school.

The second piece of data that was collected indicated that the website did have a positive impact on the number of students that requested missed assignments. This data however does not take into account the fact that during the first three weeks of data collection the school’s population was hit very hard by influenza and numerous students were absent. This may have been a factor why more students were in need of getting missing assignments. Regardless of the number of students, it took much less time to deal with the students in the second three week period because I was able to direct to the website to figure out what they had missed.

The third piece of data that was collected was not surprising. Most students felt that it was quite easy to access the website. There does still seem to be some issues with a few of them being able to access the site from home. The surprising piece of information gathered with these exit slips is the “other” category. It was not one of the original choices for the students. If these students are unable to follow simple instructions like choosing from a list of three options then it seems unlikely that they will be able to consistently navigate to the class website.

It was very interested to note that when a specific task was put on the website for the students to complete all of them completed it on time. This is the only assignment that I can think of this year where every student has completed it on time. A possible field study for next term will be looking at how well doing assignments on the website works.

The data indicates that homework boards online can be useful for some students. It is however difficult to force students to use it. I will continue to use the homework board because at the very least it provides me with a place to direct students when they are absent. It also may be more effective once I can scan and upload files to it. Most parents that I have talked to would like to see it continue. I believe that there are more powerful applications for the website that I would like to investigate in the future.